

SIDGWICK ON BENTHAM: THE ‘DOUBLE ASPECT’ OF UTILITARIANISM

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I

In the account of ‘the brief history of the development of his thought’ inserted by the editor into the ‘Preface to the Sixth Edition’ of *The Methods of Ethics*, Henry Sidgwick stated that his ‘first adhesion to a definite Ethical system was to the Utilitarianism of [John Stuart] Mill’, and went on to refer to his ‘discipleship to Mill’. As well as Mill, other philosophers who figure prominently in ‘the brief history’ are Aristotle, Joseph Butler, and Immanuel Kant. Jeremy Bentham is mentioned but once in passing.¹ Yet Bentham appears to have played a much more important role in Sidgwick’s thought than is suggested by ‘the brief history’. There is little doubt that Sidgwick read Bentham seriously. It is clear from Sidgwick’s references and allusions that he studied significant parts of the Bowring edition of Bentham’s *Works*,² including *A Fragment on Government* (1776), *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (printed 1780, published 1789), ‘Political Tactics’ (written 1788–9), *Plan of Parliamentary Reform* (1817), and *Constitutional Code* (partly published 1830). He also studied Bentham’s posthumous *Deontology* (1834), which Bowring edited, but which was condemned by John Stuart Mill as an inadequate account of Bentham’s

¹ Henry Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics*, 7th edn., London, 1907 (the first edition appeared in 1874), pp. xvi–xxiii.

² *The Works of Jeremy Bentham*, ed. John Bowring, 11 vols., Edinburgh, 1843 [hereafter Bowring]. Under the terms of Bentham’s will (reproduced in J.E. Crimmins, ed., *Bentham’s Auto-Icon and related writings*, Bristol, 2002), John Bowring, Bentham’s literary executor, received a sum of £2,000 to produce a complete edition of Bentham’s writings. Most of the editorial work was farmed out to ‘disciples’ of Bentham.

moral theory.³ Sidgwick admitted that his own ‘general view of Politics’ had been ‘originally derived from the writings of Bentham and J.S. Mill’, and noted that ‘the earlier portion’ of his *Elements of Politics*, dealing ‘with the principles of legislation’, was ‘to a considerable extent composed on the lines of Bentham’s *Principles of the Civil Code*’.⁴

Sidgwick, moreover, was so concerned by what he perceived to be the inadequate account of Bentham’s thought given by Leslie Stephen in *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*⁵ that he produced an essay on ‘Bentham and Benthamism in Politics and Ethics’ for the *Fortnightly Review* of May 1877.

Sidgwick complained that Bentham had been ‘treated with somewhat contemptuous brevity in [Stephen’s] chapter on Moral Philosophy; while in the following chapter on Political Theories’ he had been ‘barely mentioned’. Sidgwick would not have taken it upon himself ‘to supply this deficiency’ had Bentham’s thought been of ‘merely historical interest’, but, on the contrary, ‘his system’ remained ‘an important element of our current political thought’.⁶ Sidgwick was unconvinced by Stephen’s excuse that Benthamism belonged to the nineteenth century, and so was outside the scope of a study of eighteenth-century thought. In Sidgwick’s view, Bentham was the pre-eminent representative of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, and Benthamism was ‘the legacy left to the nineteenth century by the eighteenth’, being the force against

³ See, for instance, ‘Bentham’, in *Essays on Ethics, Religion, and Society*, The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, vol. X, ed. J.M. Robson, Toronto, 1969, pp. 75–115, at pp. 98–9. Sidgwick thought that some parts of the text were authentic Bentham, while other parts reflected Bowring’s views.

⁴ Henry Sidgwick, *The Elements of Politics*, 2nd edn., London, 1897 (the first edition appeared in 1891), pp. v–vi. For ‘Principles of the Civil Code’ see Bowring, i. 297–364.

⁵ Leslie Stephen, *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, 2 vols., London, 1876, Ch. IX, paras. 136–40.

⁶ Henry Sidgwick, ‘Bentham and Benthamism in Politics and Ethics’, in *Miscellaneous Essays and Addresses*, London, 1904, pp. 135–69, at p. 135.

which the newer ‘philosophy of Restoration and Reaction has had to struggle continually with varying success’.⁷ Sidgwick went on to complain that Stephen

has hardly enough recognised that Bentham’s originality and importance lay not in his verbal adoption of utility as an end and standard of right political action, but in his real exclusion of any other standard; in the definiteness with which he conceived the ‘general good’; the clearness and precision with which he analysed it into its empirically ascertainable constituents; the exhaustive and methodical consistency with which he applied this one standard to all departments of practice; and the rigour with which he kept its application free from all alien elements.⁸

Sidgwick went on to criticize Stephen for not appreciating the significance of Bentham’s contribution to political theory. Bentham had replaced the ‘metaphysico-jural dissertations’ of the eighteenth century with a theory that was ‘exclusively positive and unmetaphysical, at the same time that it is still confidently deductive and unhistorical’, and had thereby formed ‘the natural transition from the “Age of Reason” to the period of political thought in which we are now living’.⁹

There was much in Bentham’s thought with which Sidgwick agreed. Sidgwick accepted Bentham’s position that the greatest happiness meant the greatest possible surplus of pleasure over pain, and that pleasures were capable of being compared quantitatively.¹⁰ Hence, he took Bentham’s side against John Stuart Mill in relation to the distinction between the quantity and quality of pleasure. Sidgwick noted that Bentham’s statement that push-pin was as good as poetry, if it produced the same

⁷ Ibid., pp. 136–7.

⁸ Ibid., pp. 140–1.

⁹ Ibid., pp. 154–6.

¹⁰ *Methods of Ethics*, pp. 92, 413.

amount of pleasure and satisfaction,¹¹ seemed ‘to many offensively paradoxical’. Mill had abandoned it, and had argued instead that there were qualitative as well as quantitative differences between pleasures. Sidgwick concluded, however, that ‘in order to work out consistently the method that takes pleasure as the sole ultimate end of rational conduct, Bentham’s proposition must be accepted, and all *qualitative* comparison of pleasure must really resolve itself into quantitative’. Pleasures, after all, were linked by the common property of pleasantness.¹² Sidgwick agreed with Bentham (and Mill) that the scope of utilitarianism extended beyond human beings to all sentient creatures.¹³ In relation to the distribution of a given quantum of happiness, Sidgwick endorsed Bentham’s ‘formula’ that everybody was to count for one.¹⁴ The utilitarian principle itself, noted Sidgwick, gave no answer, and thus needed to be supplemented by a principle of just or right distribution. The principle adopted by most utilitarians, and one that needed no ‘special justification’, was that of pure equality.¹⁵

In ‘Bentham and Benthamism’, having discussed some of the manifold schemes with which Bentham had involved himself, and particularly his relationship with Revolutionary France and his efforts to construct a panopticon prison, Sidgwick argued that ‘the right point of view for understanding [Bentham’s] work in politics and

¹¹ See Jeremy Bentham, ‘The Rationale of Reward’, in Bowring, ii. 189–266, at 253: ‘Prejudice apart, the game of push-pin is of equal value with the arts and sciences of music and poetry. If the game of push-pin furnish more pleasure, it is more valuable than either.’

¹² *Methods of Ethics*, pp. 93–4.

¹³ Ibid., p. 414. For Bentham on the welfare of animals see *Of the Limits of the Penal Branch of Jurisprudence*, ed. P. Schofield, Oxford, 2010, pp. 4–5 n.

¹⁴ The traditional source for Bentham’s ‘formula’ was Mill’s allusion in *Utilitarianism* (1861) to ‘Bentham’s dictum “everybody to count for one, nobody for more than one”’: see *Essays on Ethics, Religion, and Society*, p. 258. The source of the quotation was no doubt Bentham’s statement that ‘Every individual in the country tells for one; no individual for more than one’, in *Rationale of Judicial Evidence, specially applied to English practice*, ed. J.S. Mill, 5 vols., London, 1827, iv. 475, and reproduced at Bowring, vii. 334.

¹⁵ *Methods of Ethics*, pp. 416–17, 432. For a statement of Bentham’s to the same effect see *Rights, Representation, and Reform: Nonsense upon Stilts and other writings on the French Revolution*, ed. P. Schofield, C. Pease-Watkin, and C. Blamires, Oxford, 2002, pp. 72–3. Bentham did, however, put forward a utilitarian justification for the principle of equality, namely the principle known today as the principle of diminishing marginal utility: see, for instance, ‘*Legislator of the World*’: *Writings on Codification, Law, and Education*, ed. P. Schofield and J. Harris, Oxford, 1998, pp. 252–3.

ethics’ was to see it ‘as the central and most important realisation of a dominant and all-comprehensive desire for the amelioration of human life, or rather of sentient existence generally’. All Bentham’s schemes and writings, from the most abstract to the most practical, were aimed at ‘the promotion of happiness’. His works ‘were written not so much to be read as to be used’, and this accounted for the difficulty of his style. Hence, ‘the “general reader” has to be warned off from most of Bentham’s volumes’, although, added Sidgwick, ‘such warning is hardly needed’.¹⁶ It was Bentham’s aim to take the ‘actual’ and ‘to reconstruct [it] systematically on rational principles’—hence, his interest in ‘[w]hat is’ was ‘always subordinated’ to bringing about ‘what ought to be’.¹⁷ While stating that William Paley had been the first to produce ‘a tolerably complete system’ of utilitarian ethics,¹⁸ Sidgwick’s opinion was that Bentham’s utilitarianism had ‘a decided superiority’ in terms of its ‘unity, consistency, and thoroughness of method’.¹⁹ This, for Sidgwick, was a considerable compliment.²⁰

II

Despite his agreement on so many points with Bentham, and his obvious admiration for Bentham, Sidgwick did, nevertheless, identify a dilemma, or rather what, in

¹⁶ There is some irony here given Sidgwick’s endorsement, however reluctant, of an esoteric morality described at *Methods of Ethics*, pp. 485–92. It should be noted that Bentham, despite the perceived obscurity of his style of writing, was a great advocate of openness and publicity in government.

¹⁷ ‘Bentham and Benthamism’, pp. 149–50.

¹⁸ Sidgwick, *Outlines of the History of Ethics for English Readers*, 2nd edn., 1888 (the first edition appeared in 1886), p. 230. Paley’s work was *The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy*, which was based on lectures delivered at the University of Cambridge, and which, following its publication in 1785, had established itself as the University’s standard text on the subject.

¹⁹ *History of Ethics*, p. 231.

²⁰ Other points of comparison between Bentham and Sidgwick that might be explored include their difficulties with being required, at the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge respectively, to subscribe to the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England, and their sympathy for the ancient Greek world’s attitude towards homosexuality: see B. Schultz, *Henry Sidgwick: Eye of the Universe. An Intellectual Biography*, Cambridge, 2004, pp. 16–18, 115–34; L. Crompton, *Byron and Greek Love: Homophobia in 19th-century England*, London, 1985, pp. 26–53, 252–83; and P. Schofield, *Utility and Democracy: the Political Thought of Jeremy Bentham*, Oxford, 2006, pp. 171–6.

‘Bentham and Benthamism’, he termed a ‘double aspect’, in Bentham’s utilitarianism, which had resulted in ‘much perplexity both to disciples and to opponents’. The ‘double aspect’ consisted on the one hand in Bentham’s desire to promote the general happiness, and on the other hand his conviction ‘of the unqualified selfishness of the vast majority of human beings’.²¹ Sidgwick claimed that Bentham had found both doctrines in the work of Helvétius, who had argued, first, that every human being, on all occasions and at all times, sought his own interest, and second, that what were termed virtues were qualities useful to the public. In order to promote virtue in these circumstances, according to Helvétius, the moralist had to turn to legislation, and thereby harmonise universal self-preference with public utility.²² The problem, then, was how to ensure that self-interested individuals promoted a non-selfish end, the happiness of the community as a whole.

The problem of the ‘double aspect’ was restated in *Outlines of the History of Ethics*, where Sidgwick dealt with Bentham in his final chapter, entitled ‘Modern, chiefly English, Ethics’, which began with Francis Bacon and ended with T.H. Green. Sidgwick treated Bentham as part of a utilitarian school that also included John Gay, Abraham Tucker, William Paley, and John Stuart Mill, and which he saw as opposed to an intuitional school that included Richard Price, Thomas Reid, Dugald Stewart, and William Whewell. The utilitarians had conflated the two ‘fundamental questions of morals’, that is ‘What is right?’ and ‘Why should I do it?’, by answering them both by

²¹ ‘Bentham and Benthamism’, pp. 150–1. The problem of the ‘double aspect’ of utilitarianism was a different problem from that of the ‘Dualism of the Practical Reason’ (*Methods of Ethics*, p. xxi), which has received so much attention (see, for instance, J.B. Schneewind, *Sidgwick’s Ethics and Victorian Moral Philosophy*, Oxford, 1977, pp. 352–79; and Schultz, *Sidgwick*, pp. 205–53). The ‘Dualism of the Practical Reason’ concerns the question as to whether egoistic hedonism (Epicureanism) or universalistic hedonism (utilitarianism) is the proper basis for ethics. The ‘double aspect’ is the problem of how, once utilitarianism is accepted as the proper basis for ethics, self-interested individuals can be brought to do their moral duty. To put this another way, the ‘Dualism of the Practical Reason’ is a problem within ethics, whereas the ‘double aspect’ is a problem concerning the relationship between psychology and ethics. There does, however, seem to be significant overlap in Sidgwick’s attempts to deal with the two problems.

²² ‘Bentham and Benthamism’, pp. 150–3.

the use of ‘a single apparently clear notion—pleasure and its negative quantity pain’. The right action was that which promoted the general happiness, which consisted in a balance on the side of pleasure over pain, while the reason that one should do it was ‘the effect on the will of the pleasures or pains attached to the observance or violation of moral rules’—in other words, because of sanctions. Sidgwick argued that there was no ‘logical connection between the answers that have thus come to be considered as one doctrine’, and that ‘this apparent unity and simplicity has really hidden fundamental disagreements’.²³

In order to appreciate the exact nature of the problem of the ‘double aspect’ of utilitarianism, it is helpful to explore Sidgwick’s conception of the is/ought distinction and the related distinction between the positive sciences and ethics, and his classification of the main ethical theories. Sidgwick began *Methods of Ethics* by explaining that the positive sciences, such as psychology or sociology, were concerned with what ‘merely is, has been, or will be’, while ethics was concerned with what individuals ought to do or what it was right for them to do, and politics with what public officials ought to do. To explain conduct, which was the province of the positive sciences, was ‘essentially different’ from the attempt to determine what conduct was right, which was the province of ethics.²⁴ There were only two ends, argued Sidgwick, which had a strong claim to be regarded as rational ultimate ends of conduct—in other words, as the proper standard of right and wrong—and these were happiness and the perfection of human nature. Happiness, as the ultimate end, might be understood in terms of either individual happiness or universal happiness—the former was egoistic hedonism or Epicureanism, and the latter universalistic hedonism. This

²³ *History of Ethics*, pp. 227–8.

²⁴ *Methods of Ethics*, pp. 1–2.

latter was the doctrine of Bentham and his successors, and was utilitarianism.²⁵ To hold that perfection was the ultimate end was to hold a version of intuitionism, where right conduct was determined by reference to axioms of duty that were intuitively known. Although the doctrines of egoistic hedonism (Epicureanism) and universalistic hedonism (utilitarianism) were closely related, in that they were both consequentialist, pleasure-maximizing, and overlapped in their practical recommendations,²⁶ Sidgwick believed that the practical affinity between utilitarianism and intuitionism was much greater than that between the two forms of hedonism. Intuitionists regarded the general happiness as an end to which the rules of morality were the best means. Utilitarianism was an ally of intuitionism, in that both were opposed to the egoism that Sidgwick associated with Thomas Hobbes.²⁷

A difficulty arose, however, because universalistic hedonism (utilitarianism)—the doctrine that the right conduct was that which would produce the greatest amount of happiness for the whole community—was sometimes confused with egoistic hedonism—that the right conduct was that which would produce the greatest happiness of the actor himself—and both were sometimes confused with the psychological theory that every agent sought his own individual happiness. There was, however, ‘no *necessary* connexion between this latter proposition’, which belonged to the positive science of psychology, ‘and any ethical theory’.²⁸ In similar vein, in his discussion of the notion of ‘Nature’, Sidgwick noted that every attempt to derive ‘what ought to be’ from ‘what is’ failed. There was no principled way of distinguishing ‘natural impulses’ from ‘unnatural’. All that natural meant in this context was common as opposed to rare, or original as opposed to later. It was impossible to extract ‘a definite practical

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 9–11.

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 83–4.

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 85–6.

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 411–12.

criterion of the rightness of actions' from the notion of Nature.²⁹ Psychology belonged to nature, and could not form the basis for ethics.

In *History of Ethics*, Sidgwick discussed the attempts that had been made to solve the problem of the 'double aspect'. Having determined what the best action might be, he noted, the next question was—how was a man to be made to do it? These were, of course, the 'two fundamental questions of morals'. How did Bentham, for instance, reconcile his view that the proper end of action of the individual was his own greatest happiness, with his view that the proper standard of right and wrong was the greatest happiness of the greatest number? Sidgwick explained that Bentham relied on the four sanctions he had identified, namely the physical, the political including the legal, the moral or popular, and the religious, which were the source of pains and pleasures, and thereby constituted motives to action.³⁰ The religious sanction did not introduce the notion of 'the will of an omnipotent and benevolent being as a means of logically connecting individual and general happiness', commented Sidgwick, but rather referred to religious hopes and fears as they operated on the minds of individuals, and hence Bentham had retained 'mundane experience' as the 'plain and palpable basis' of his 'system'. While this avoided 'the disputable inferences from nature and Scripture in which Paley's system is involved', the 'gain is dearly purchased', for there was no guarantee that the sanctions, by which the moral rules which promoted the greatest happiness of the greatest number were enforced, would be adequate.

Sidgwick reconstructed Bentham's position from two passages from Bowring's 'Memoirs of Bentham' in order to highlight what he saw as the deficiency or contradiction in Bentham's thought. Sidgwick asked:

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 81, 83.

³⁰ See Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, ed. J.H. Burns and H.L.A. Hart, London, 1970, pp. 34–7.

How does Bentham reconcile the proposition that the ‘constantly proper end of action on the part of every individual at the moment of action is his real greatest happiness from that moment to the end of life,’ with the acceptance of the ‘greatest happiness of the greatest number’ as a ‘plain but true standard for whatever is right and wrong in the field of morals?’³¹

The first of Sidgwick’s quotations came from a passage which Bowring appears to have taken directly from one of Bentham’s original manuscripts, and the second from the record of a conversation he had with Bentham.³² The key quotation is the first, which is evidently taken from a marginal summary sheet. Bentham wrote summaries of the content of his text in the margin of the text sheets, and then had these summaries copied onto marginal summary sheets. These sheets gave him a concise statement of the content of the text itself, and thereby aided him in organizing the structure of the work in question. Sidgwick’s quotation is taken from the second marginal summary of a sequence of seventeen. The first four marginal summary paragraphs in this sequence are given by Bowring as follows:

1. Constantly actual end of action on the part of every individual at the moment of action, his greatest happiness, according to his view of it at that moment.
2. Constantly proper end of action on the part of every individual at the moment of action, his real greatest happiness from that moment to the end of his life. See *Deontology* private.
3. Constantly proper end of action on the part of every individual considered as trustee for the community, of which he is considered as a member, the greatest happiness of that same community, in so far as depends upon the interest which forms the bond of union between its members.

³¹ *History of Ethics*, p. 235.

³² See Bowring, x. 560 and 79 respectively.

4. Constantly proper end of action on the part of an individual, having a share in the power of legislation in and for an independent community, termed a political state, the greatest happiness of the greatest number of its members.

The contrast being drawn by Bentham was between the end of private ethics, where the only person affected by an action was the actor himself, and the end of public ethics, where the actor was a public official, and hence in a position of trust. Bentham was not stating that the proper end of each individual's action was his own greatest happiness and, at the same time, the greatest happiness of the greatest number, which would have been to contradict himself. There was, indeed, a connection between the greatest happiness of the individual and the greatest happiness of the greatest number, in that the latter was made up of the aggregate happiness of the individuals that composed the community in question. Nevertheless, the point remains that Sidgwick misinterpreted this passage by assuming that this was a full statement of Bentham's position, rather than a summary of certain axioms which formed the basis for his theory of constitutional law, and by ignoring the distinction Bentham was making between private and public ethics. As we shall see in more detail below, Bentham's fully expressed view was that the actual end of each individual's action was predominantly, but not universally, his own happiness, but that there was plenty of scope for 'other-regarding' actions, where the actor's intention was to promote the happiness of persons other than himself.

Sidgwick continued by claiming that Bentham did not give any 'complete answer' to the problem of the 'double aspect' in any of his published works. On the contrary, in his legislative and constitutional writings, Bentham tended to assume that the happiness, or interests, of individuals would clash, unless there was some adjustment made to their prudential (i.e. self-interested) calculations by the use of

punishment. ‘But obviously’, continued Sidgwick, ‘on this assumption a satisfactory system of private conduct on utilitarian principles cannot be constructed until legislative and constitutional reform has been perfected’. Bentham’s strategy, argued Sidgwick, was rather to impress on individuals the extent to which their own happiness was promoted by measures that contributed to the general happiness.³³

By not giving a ‘completely reasoned account’ of what men ought to do, argued Sidgwick, Bentham had left a ‘gap’ in his system that his ‘disciples’ had either ignored or attempted to fill. Some had argued that a man always promoted his own happiness by promoting that of others; John Austin had returned to Paley’s doctrine and founded utilitarian morality on the will of God; George Grote had limited the duty to promote the greatest happiness; while John Stuart Mill had advocated ‘an unqualified subordination of private to general happiness’.³⁴ In short, the history of utilitarian ethics since Bentham had been dominated by the need to provide a convincing account of moral obligation—why it was that self-interested individuals should strive to promote the greatest happiness of the greatest number. Sidgwick concluded that neither Bentham nor Mill had provided an adequate account of moral obligation, and could not do so without abandoning the ‘purely empirical basis’ of their utilitarianism.

Sidgwick gave a similar account in ‘Bentham and Benthamism’. Bentham’s theory of virtue, derived from Helvétius, had two aspects, the psychological and the ethical. From the psychological point of view, ‘common morality’ was ‘the simple result of common selfishness’. Hence, each man approved of what he thought useful to him, and the public, which was ‘merely an aggregate of individuals’, approved of what it thought useful to the public. As well as failing to explain why men’s moral

³³ *History of Ethics*, pp. 233–6. As we shall see, Bentham’s strategy was precisely as Sidgwick suggested—namely, to perfect legislative and constitutional reform.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 236–7.

judgements agreed to the extent that they did, the theory failed to provide any rational account of the ‘transition’ from an egoistic psychology to the ethical principle that the standard of right and wrong was public utility. Bentham did not, in fact, try to maintain that there was, said Sidgwick, but rather just admitted that he simply approved of the principle of utility: ‘he aims at the general happiness because he happens to prefer it’.³⁵ The utilitarian moralist might compose a moral code which would provide guidance to those already committed to utilitarian morality, but since such persons were so few in number, ‘it would hardly be worth while to print a book for them’. For Sidgwick, ‘the practically important question’ was how the utilitarian moralist should deal with ‘the great mass of mankind’ who were not motivated by a desire to promote the general happiness.

One answer had been provided by Paley and Austin, who had treated ‘the rules of utilitarian duty as a code of Divine Law, adequately supported by religious sanctions’. Bentham had not endorsed this approach, though he had not ‘expressly excluded’ it.³⁶ There were two further options, both of which, ‘from a utilitarian point of view’, were ‘perfectly appropriate’. One option, which Sidgwick did not attribute to Bentham, was to argue that duty and happiness would always coincide in practice.³⁷ Sidgwick pointed out that, had Bentham taken this approach, his emphasis in *Constitutional Code* on the self-preference of monarchs and aristocrats would not have

³⁵ Bentham did indeed state that it was his desire that rulers took the greatest happiness of the greatest number as the end of government: see *First Principles preparatory to Constitutional Code*, ed. P. Schofield, Oxford, 1989 p. 230. For him to have admitted, however, that he was a partisan of the principle of utility merely because he liked it would have placed him on a level with the partisans of the rival principle of sympathy and antipathy, who elevated their personal likes and dislikes into the standard of right and wrong. It was the objective, ‘external’ aspect of the principle of utility that distinguished it from other, plausible ethical theories, all of which fell under the general category of the principle of sympathy and antipathy. The principle of asceticism, where the right and proper end of action was the promotion of pain and the avoidance of pleasure, was not a plausible theory, in that any attempt to pursue it systematically would quickly turn earth into ‘hell’. See *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, pp. 21–31.

³⁶ Sidgwick does not appear to have appreciated the strength of Bentham’s opposition to religion: see, for instance, P. Schofield, *Bentham: A Guide for the Perplexed*, London, 2009, pp. 116–36.

³⁷ Sidgwick conceded that this position was maintained in Bowring’s edition of Bentham’s *Deontology*, but attributed it to Bowring, who was ‘an enthusiastic and not very clear-headed disciple’.

made sense, and there would have been no need for the artificial identification of interests that he had recommended.³⁸ The other option was to offer the utilitarian code ‘to mankind as a standard for rectifying their ordinary judgments of approbation and disapprobation, clearing them from a certain amount of confusion and conflict which now perplexes them, and so increasing their beneficent effect’. This view was implicit in Bentham’s treatment of the moral sanction, and ‘was the view taken by James Mill’. Bentham, however, went beyond the view that private ethics consisted in merely ‘the art of praising or blaming’, to the view that men should be shown the ways in which their duty often coincided with their interest. The more important part of this coincidence was to be enforced by the legislator, while the moralist would ‘exhibit the minor supplementary prescriptions of duty’.³⁹

Sidgwick believed that Bentham had created the problem of the ‘double aspect’ by including both a psychological and an ethical dimension in his utilitarianism. Bentham, and after him John Stuart Mill, had then failed to deal adequately with the problem. According to Sidgwick, from Bentham’s psychological doctrine, that every human being aimed at his own greatest happiness, it seemed to follow that it was ‘useless’ to point out to a man the conduct that would promote the general happiness, unless he was convinced that it would promote his own. ‘Hence on this view’, noted Sidgwick, ‘egoistic and hedonistic considerations must necessarily be combined in any practical treatment of morality’, and it would not be surprising to find ‘Bentham or his disciples’ attempting to base universalistic hedonism, of which they approved, on the egoism which they saw as a necessary feature of human nature. And so it was that John Stuart Mill had tried ‘to establish a logical connexion between the psychological and ethical principles he holds in common with Bentham’, and had argued that,

³⁸ See further below.

³⁹ ‘Bentham and Benthamism’, pp. 164–8.

because each man sought his own happiness, he ought to seek the happiness of others.⁴⁰

How did Sidgwick himself deal with the second of the two ‘fundamental questions’ of ethics, that is how to make a man do his duty? It should at the beginning be noted that Sidgwick did not accept the egoistic psychology which he attributed to Bentham and the utilitarians. He argued that men were not motivated by the desire for selfish pleasure alone, but were also motivated by other ‘impulses’ that might include ‘the love of virtue for its own sake, or desire to do what is right as such’.⁴¹ Sidgwick believed that there existed a harmony between ‘the maxim of Prudence and the maxim of Rational Benevolence’. Rejecting both of the utilitarian solutions to the problem of the ‘double aspect’, namely the reliance either on sanctions or on the natural harmony of interests, he appealed to a combination of ‘the moral intuition that the Good of the whole is reasonably to be preferred to the Good of a part’ and the sense of pain that accompanied any ‘conscious choice of my own pleasure at the expense of pain or loss to others’.⁴² Sidgwick had to admit, however, that an ‘inseparable connexion between Utilitarian Duty and the greatest happiness of the individual who conforms to it’ could not be ‘satisfactorily demonstrated on empirical grounds’. It seems that Sidgwick thought that the only solution was to appeal, like utilitarians such as Paley and Austin, to the existence of an afterlife in which a utilitarian God would distribute rewards and punishments according to the merit or demerit of the individual’s actions in the present life. The utilitarian code was conceived as the law of God, who had commanded men to promote the general happiness. The rational egoist who accepted this proposition

⁴⁰ *Methods of Ethics*, pp. 84–5. Sidgwick was alluding to Mill’s statement in *Utilitarianism* that, ‘No reason can be given why the general happiness is desirable, except that each person, so far as he believes it to be attainable, desires his own happiness’: see *Essays on Ethics, Religion, and Society*, p. 234.

⁴¹ *Methods of Ethics*, p. 52.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 498–500. In ‘the brief history’, Sidgwick stated that he had eventually come to the view that the utilitarian ethic was founded on an ‘a fundamental intuition’: see *ibid.*, pp. xxii–xxiii.

needed ‘no further inducement to frame his life on Utilitarian principles’. But how, asked Sidgwick, was the conviction of the existence of God obtained? The answer was that it was obtained either through revelation, or through reason, or through both. If through reason, then ethics and theology were so closely connected that they could not be clearly separated.⁴³ It might be objected that the happiness of sentient beings was ‘so imperfectly attained’ in the actual world, that universal happiness could not be conceived to be God’s end, unless God was not considered to be omnipotent. In response, it might be argued that ‘the *quantum* of happiness ultimately attained’ in the universe was at its maximum. This, however, was a position for the theologian to develop. Whatever the case, there was no argument from natural theology that opposed the view that happiness was the ultimate good.⁴⁴ There was, in other words, no theological reason for rejecting utilitarianism. But neither did ethics as such provide a totally satisfactory account of why men should do their duty.

Viewed in the context of his accounts in ‘Bentham and Benthamism’ and the *History of Ethics*, Sidgwick’s *Methods of Ethics* was, in an important sense, an attempt to deal with the problem of the ‘double aspect’ which had been highlighted by his reading of Bentham: namely how to provide an adequate inducement for self-interested individuals to promote the general happiness. Yet, in the end, it seems plausible to argue that not only did Sidgwick find the problem in Bentham, but also found there a large part of the solution, insofar as there was a solution without trespassing into theology. A utilitarian system of morality (including that of Bentham), stated Sidgwick, could still be used in various ways, irrespective of whether the sanctions it provided were adequate. First, it could offer ‘practical guidance’ to those who, for whatever reason, had chosen the utilitarian principle as the ‘ultimate end’ of

⁴³ Ibid., pp. 503–4.

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 505–6.

their conduct. Second, it could point out those areas where there was a coincidence between individual and general interest. Third, it could provide a standard by which the conduct of others might be praised or blamed, even though men might not be prepared to act upon it themselves. ‘We may regard morality’, noted Sidgwick, ‘as a kind of supplementary legislation, supported by public opinion, which we may expect the public, when duly enlightened, to frame in accordance with the public interest.’⁴⁵ These were strategies which, as we have seen, Sidgwick attributed to Bentham or his ‘disciples’. In a very real sense, Sidgwick was operating within the parameters of Bentham’s thought, and was, on the question of the relationship of duty to interest, more of a ‘Benthamite’ than a ‘Millian’. It had been Bentham who had provided a rigorous and systematic account of the proper ethical standard, had successfully analysed the notion of happiness into its constituent elements of pleasure, and had, in fact, developed as plausible a strategy as could be found for bringing men to do their duty. Indeed, Bentham’s solution to the problem, as described by Sidgwick, seems to fall little short of Sidgwick’s solution—once it is accepted that an appeal to God is out of bounds for the ethical philosopher. Ultimately, however, Sidgwick seemed to think that, without God, no strategy could be entirely successful.

III

Stepping back from Sidgwick’s account of Bentham, and viewing matters now from Bentham’s perspective, Bentham would have rejected Sidgwick’s claim that there was no necessary connection between psychology and ethics, and would have disputed Sidgwick’s claim that he was committed to the view that the individual always acted in a completely self-interested manner. Bentham’s ethical theory had a ‘naturalistic’

⁴⁵ *History of Ethics*, pp. 239–40.

basis, in that it was founded on the existence of pleasure and pain, which were what Bentham termed ‘real entities’—in other words, pleasure and pain had a physical existence. For Bentham, Sidgwick’s claim that the right action was that which produced the general happiness, consisting in the maximum amount of pleasure and the minimum amount of pain, while at the same time denying that ethics had a physical or natural basis, would have been nonsense. In *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, Bentham outlined the way in which a particular ‘lot’ of pleasure or pain could be measured. Considered from the point of view of a single individual, the quantity, and hence the value, of any particular pain or pleasure depended on the product of four elements or circumstances, namely intensity, duration, certainty, and propinquity. When an action which produced pleasure or pain was being considered, two further circumstances had to be taken into account, namely fecundity (the chance of the pleasure or pain being followed by sensations of the same kind) and purity (the chance of the pleasure or pain not being followed by sensations of the opposite kind). Where more than one individual was concerned, a seventh element or circumstance that had to be taken into account was extent, that is the pleasures and pains of the whole number of persons affected by the action in question. An action was right, or good, or proper, insofar as it produced a balance of pleasure over pain when all seven circumstances were taken into account. It was wrong, or evil, or improper, insofar as it produced a balance of pain over pleasure.⁴⁶ The ethical standard represented by the principle of utility was, therefore, grounded in the physical experiences of pleasures and pains distributed among each and every person affected by the action in question.

⁴⁶ Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, pp. 38–41.

In stating that Bentham was committed to the view that each individual was totally self-interested, Sidgwick misrepresented Bentham's position. Sidgwick stated:

If, as Bentham affirms, 'on the occasion of every act he exercises, every human being is' inevitably 'led to pursue that line of conduct which, according to his view of the case, taken by him at the moment, will be in the highest degree contributory to his own greatest happiness,' then, to any one who knows this, it must become inconceivable that Reason dictates to him to pursue any other line of conduct.⁴⁷

The work from which this quotation is taken, edited by Richard Doane, formerly an amanuensis of Bentham, formed an introduction for the version of *Constitutional Code* that appeared in the Bowring edition.⁴⁸ Doane amalgamated material from several different essays, written at different times, some of which were not composed for *Constitutional Code*, in order to create chapters devoted to particular themes, for instance corruption, public opinion, and titles of honour. The result was a hotchpotch, which did not faithfully reproduce Bentham's intentions. The section in which the passage quoted by Sidgwick appears originally formed part of an essay entitled 'Constitutional Code Rationale' which is now published in authoritative form in *First Principles preparatory to Constitutional Code*. When the version of the text in the Bowring edition is compared with that in *First Principles*, one finds that the very sentence which Sidgwick quotes is omitted from the latter. This is because the sentence in question was interpolated by Doane from an earlier draft of the section.⁴⁹

Aside from these editorial matters, Bentham's purpose in the sentence in question was

⁴⁷ *Methods of Ethics*, p. 41.

⁴⁸ Sidgwick gives as his source for the quotation '*Constitutional Code*, Introduction, § 2' (see *Methods of Ethics*, p. 41 n.), i.e. Bowring, ix. 5. The equivalent section now appears in Jeremy Bentham, *First Principles preparatory to Constitutional Code*, ed. P. Schofield, Oxford, 1989, pp. 232–7, though, as explained below, without the specific sentence quoted by Sidgwick.

⁴⁹ The original manuscript is at University College London Library, Bentham Papers, Box xxxvi, fo. 83.

to give an exposition of the ‘principle of self-preference’. He was not stipulating that each and every human being was on each and every occasion motivated purely by self-preference. His argument, in fact, was not that each person was ‘inevitably’ (Sidgwick’s addition) led to pursue his self-interest, irrespective of its impact on the general interest, but rather that self-preference was the ‘predominant’ motive in human nature. This meant that, as far as the legislator was concerned, the only sensible assumption on which to ground a code of law was that people in general would be motivated by self-preference. It also meant that, as rulers were, from this psychological perspective, no different from any other members of the community, they had to be treated by constitutional law in exactly the same way as subjects were treated by penal and civil law.

Bentham’s wider purpose in the section in which this sentence was interpolated was to outline, in very broad terms, the general principles on which a representative democracy was founded, the only form of government capable of promoting the general interest. Bentham noted that, ‘The right and proper end of government in every political community is the greatest happiness of all the individuals of which it is composed’. The actual end of government, however, was the greatest happiness of rulers. The conflict between the right end and the actual end of government constituted a natural opposition of interests. Hence a third principle was necessary—the junction-of-interests-prescribing principle—by which the natural opposition of interests was replaced by an artificial identification of interests. It was the purpose of constitutional law to bring about this artificial identification of interests, and it was achieved by placing rulers in such a situation that the only means they possessed of promoting their own interest was through promoting the general interest. Each person, including each ruler, had, as well as their predominant self-interest, a share in the general interest. The

ruler's ability to promote his self-interest by measures opposed to the general interest was removed or neutralized, leaving him with the ability to promote his self-interest only through the promotion of his share in the general interest.⁵⁰

That this was Bentham's considered position in his later constitutional writings can be further instanced by reference to a passage written in 1822 in an essay advising the Spanish to relinquish their claims to their overseas possessions. Bentham noted that it had been the endeavour of every person in possession of political power to advance their own particular interest, and thereby to engage in the sinister sacrifice, whereby the general interest was sacrificed to the particular interest of the rulers.

Such, therefore, in every country, and at every time, has been, and will be, the case with the *ruling few* in their dealings with the *subject many*. To this endeavour, by nothing but the view of *inability* can any effectual bar be opposed: nor, in this case, can any bar be effectual other than a *power*, on the part of the *subject many*, to *remove* the ruling few from their respective situations: and this, with a degree of promptitude, sufficient, in every instance, to anticipate the consummation of the *sinister sacrifice*.

There was nothing to be gained from pointing out some extraordinary sacrifice made by rulers of their particular interest in favour of the general interest, since it was 'to the general tenor of human conduct, and not to any extraordinary deviations from it, that, on pain of being ineffectual, all such arrangements must be adapted'. Given the infrequency of this sort of sacrifice, 'the only supposition that, on any given occasion, can, in regard to any one man so situated, be rationally entertained and acted upon, is—that, in his instance, it is by his self-regarding interest, according to his own conception of it at the time, that his conduct will be determined'. This was the very

⁵⁰ *First Principles*, pp. 232–7. For Bentham's constitutional theory see F. Rosen, *Jeremy Bentham and Representative Democracy: A Study of the Constitutional Code*, Oxford, 1983; and Schofield, *Utility and Democracy*, pp. 250–303.

same basis on which rulers proceeded when attaching punishment and reward to the provisions of the penal and civil law. Given that this was the way they acted when exercising power over the subject many, they could not argue that they should be treated any differently when constitutional law was applied to them.⁵¹ Bentham's point was not that every person, at all times, was motivated by self-interest, but rather that this was the only sensible basis on which to proceed when legislating, whether that legislation was aimed at subjects generally (penal and civil law) or at rulers (constitutional law). Moreover, he believed that interests could be so arranged—in particular by a democratic political structure—that individuals did have sufficient motives to promote the general interest, and thereby solve the problem of the 'double aspect'. It is worth reiterating that the problem of the 'double aspect' was not so acute when self-interest was viewed as 'predominant' rather than as 'inevitable'.

Having said that, Sidgwick did, in fact, recognize that this strategy of the identification of the interests of rulers and subjects had been adopted by Bentham in his later constitutional writings.⁵² Sidgwick pointed out that 'the rational basis of [Bentham's] constitutional construction ... consists in a few very natural inferences from the ethical and psychological premises on which his whole social activity proceeded'.

If once we regard the administration of law as a machinery indispensable for identifying the interest of individuals with the conduct by which they will most promote the general happiness, so that through a skilful adjustment of rewards and punishments the universally active force of self-preference is made to produce the results at which universal benevolence would aim, it is plain that

⁵¹ Jeremy Bentham, *Colonies, Commerce, and Constitutional Law: Rid Yourselves of Ultramarina and other writings on Spain and Spanish America*, ed. P. Schofield, Oxford, 1995, pp. 34–6.

⁵² 'Bentham and Benthamism', pp. 156–8. Sidgwick dated the radical phase in Bentham's career from the publication of *Plan of Parliamentary Reform* in 1817, though Bentham had in fact become committed to political radicalism by 1809: see P. Schofield, *Utility and Democracy*, pp. 131–40.

our arrangements are incomplete unless they include means for similarly regulating the self-preferences of those who are to work and repair the machine.

The identification of interests would be achieved by the appropriate distribution of rewards and punishments. The task, noted Sidgwick, was far more difficult in relation to governors than in relation to private individuals. Bentham's solution lay in representative democracy. The identification of interests between governors and governed was achieved by providing 'that government, while supreme over individuals, shall be under the continual vigilant control of the citizens acting collectively'. Bentham's supreme legislature was not 'a majestic incarnation of the sovereignty of the people; it is merely a collection of agents, appointed by the people to manage a certain part of their concerns, liable, like other agents, to legal punishment if they can be proved to have violated their trust, and to instant dismissal if it seem probable that they have done so'.⁵³ Sidgwick, however, thought that Bentham was ultimately unsuccessful in reconciling self-interest with general happiness:

unless a little more sociality is allowed to an average human being, the problem of combining these egoists into an organisation for promoting their common happiness is like the old task of making ropes of sand. The difficulty that Hobbes vainly tried to settle summarily by absolute despotism is hardly likely to be overcome by the democratic artifices of his more inventive successor.⁵⁴

⁵³ 'Bentham and Benthamism', pp. 158–60.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 163. On Sidgwick's reasons for rejecting Bentham's account of sanctions as a satisfactory solution to the problem of reconciling interest and duty see R. Harrison, 'The Sanctions of Utilitarianism', in R. Harrison, ed., *Henry Sidgwick*, Oxford, 2001, pp. 93–116. Harrison describes Bentham's turn to democracy as a 'political solution' to a moral problem, but as R. Crisp points out ('Sanctions in Bentham, Mill, and Sidgwick', *ibid.*, pp. 117–22, at p. 119), this is to overlook Bentham's further appeal to the moral sanction. It might be added that Bentham viewed politics, or legislation, as a branch of morals. It might be further added that Harrison views the problem from the perspective of the 'Dualism of the Practical Reason' rather from that of the 'double aspect' of utilitarianism.

If all that was needed was ‘more sociality’, then Bentham’s psychology was able to provide it. Despite Sidgwick’s characterization, Bentham was not a psychological egoist, and left considerable scope within human nature for the operation of sympathy and benevolence.⁵⁵

IV

One area where Sidgwick and Bentham appear to be significantly at odds is in relation to the morality of common sense or intuitionism. Sidgwick’s view was that utilitarianism and the morality of common sense were partners rather than rivals. It had only been since Bentham, argued Sidgwick, that utilitarianism had been regarded as opposed to common sense. In contrast, earlier exponents of the doctrine, such as Cumberland, Shaftesbury, Hume, and Smith (Sidgwick was generous in his appropriation of moralists to the utilitarian tradition), had seen a coincidence. Sidgwick thought that the morality of common sense tended towards utilitarian conclusions, even though, he admitted, there was ‘a great difference’ between the intuitionist assertion that virtue would produce happiness, and the utilitarian view that the right action was that which would produce the greatest happiness. Had there been an exact coincidence between the morality of common sense and the dictates of utilitarianism, the latter would be redundant. But there was no such exact coincidence, and so utilitarianism could be seen as ‘the scientifically complete and systematically reflective form’ of the morality of common sense.⁵⁶ In short, common sense enshrined an inchoate striving for the greatest happiness, and was essentially in harmony with the dictates of utility. Utilitarianism was common sense rendered coherent, consistent, and

⁵⁵ See, for instance, Jeremy Bentham, *Deontology together with A Table of the Springs of Action and Article on Utilitarianism*, ed. A. Goldworth, Oxford, 1983, pp. 196–207 ; Schofield, *Bentham: A Guide for the Perplexed*, pp. 53–8.

⁵⁶ *Methods of Ethics*, pp. 423–5.

complete. In turn, common sense provided a body of utilitarian doctrine, whose obscurities and conflicts could be clarified and settled by reference to the utilitarian standard.⁵⁷ In the end, it was common sense that provided the basis for utilitarianism itself, since the basis for ethics was ‘a strong disposition to accept’ propositions ‘commonly taken to be universally true’, and ‘indispensable to the systematic coherence of our beliefs’.⁵⁸

Sidgwick contended that his approach was very different to that adopted by Bentham, whose attempt to produce a perfect utilitarian system was beset with difficulties. It was ‘*prima facie* absurd to lay down a set of ideal Utilitarian rules for mankind generally’.⁵⁹ The problem was that, were the morality of ‘an average Englishman’ to be abstracted, what would remain would be ‘an entity so purely hypothetical, that it is not clear what practical purpose can be served by constructing a system of moral rules for the community of such beings’. The moralist had no option but to deal with the men who existed at present, with their existing ‘moral habits, impulses, and tastes’, living in conditions as they presently existed or might exist in the immediately foreseeable future, and recognize that such men could be altered only in limited ways and to a limited degree.⁶⁰ The utilitarian could not ‘construct a morality *de novo* either for man as he is (abstracting his morality), or for man as he ought to be and will be. He must start ... with the existing social order, and the existing morality as a part of that order’.⁶¹ The only practical way forward was to improve the existing, imperfect moral order. This was to be achieved by comparing the total amounts of

⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 460–1.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 509.

⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 467–8.

⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 468–9.

⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 473–4.

pleasure and pain expected to result from maintaining an existing rule as opposed to that expected from the introduction of a new rule.⁶²

But even here, Sidgwick was not, perhaps, so far from Bentham as he imagined, in that Bentham recognized the overarching importance of the security of expectations—that is expectations based on the existing order of things—as a component of human happiness. Bentham's most radical proposal for the promotion of equality by the redistribution of wealth was to extend the law of escheat, in particular by the appropriation of collateral successions. The advantage of this proposal was that a degree of equality could be achieved without upsetting existing expectations.⁶³ Bentham's proposal to this effect was fully and explicitly endorsed by Sidgwick in *Elements of Politics*.⁶⁴

An irony, in relation to the problem of the 'double aspect' of utilitarianism, was that, in *A Fragment on Government*, Bentham had been the first to explore systematically the distinction between what is and what ought to be. Bentham had distinguished between expository and censorial jurisprudence, the former concerned with law as it is, and the latter with law as it ought to be.⁶⁵ Sidgwick knew this, noting that, in his endeavour to bring about the 'union of morals and legislation', Bentham had, in *A Fragment on Government*, separated the study of what exists from that of what ought to be, which he had found to be hopelessly confused in Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Laws of England*.⁶⁶ A further irony is that Bentham did not, in fact, regard his psychological theory—that each person is motivated by a desire for

⁶² Ibid., pp. 476–7.

⁶³ See Jeremy Bentham, 'Supply without Burthen; or Escheat vice Taxation' (1793), in Bowring, ii. 585–98.

⁶⁴ *Elements of Politics*, pp. 105–8.

⁶⁵ Jeremy Bentham, *A Comment on the Commentaries and A Fragment on Government*, ed. J.H. Burns and H.L.A. Hart, London, 1977, pp. 397–8.

⁶⁶ 'Bentham and Benthamism', pp. 153–4. Harrison, 'Sanctions of Utilitarianism', p. 103, states that Sidgwick believed that Mill had mistakenly derived the 'is' from the 'ought', but that Bentham did not, for Bentham held that 'the descriptive psychology' was 'quite distinct from the evaluative ethics'. If this was indeed Sidgwick's view, then once again it places Sidgwick closer to Bentham than to Mill.

pleasure and an aversion to pain—as part of his utilitarianism. He was totally clear that the principle of utility was an ethical standard and an ethical standard alone, albeit grounded in the ‘real entities’ of pleasure and pain. In short, Bentham would have recognized the problem of the ‘double aspect’ to the extent that the relationship between psychology and ethics needed to be explained, but he would have claimed that he had provided a rigorous and convincing exposition of that relationship.

In conclusion, it is worth reiterating two main points. The first is that, despite his statement that he was a ‘disciple to Mill’, in his ethics Sidgwick adopted a position which was, in many important respects, closer to that of Bentham. The second is that Sidgwick failed to grasp that Bentham’s view of human psychology was not egoistic, and that the problem of the ‘double aspect’ of utilitarianism, at least as far as Bentham was concerned, did not exist as such. Bentham recognized that the legislator had to deal with predominantly self-interested individuals, and hence aimed to bring about the identification of interests by means of penal, civil, and constitutional law, and, it should be added, by the influence of an enlightened public opinion. From Sidgwick’s point of view, however, even if he had been able to accept that Bentham had dealt adequately with the problem of the ‘double aspect’ of utilitarianism, the problem of the ‘Dualism of the Practical Reason’ would have remained. Having said that, the problems were closely related, and it might have been the case that had Sidgwick found in Bentham more resources for dealing with the former, he might have been less pessimistic in his own ability to deal with the latter. A good deal of the difficulty in finding such resources lay with Bentham himself for his haphazard approach to the publication of his writings, but also with the inadequacies of the nineteenth-century editors who contributed to the Bowring edition. Had Sidgwick, for instance, had access to a reliable and authoritative edition of Bentham’s writings, it is possible that his

assessment of Bentham would have been even more insightful and sympathetic, and the subsequent development of the utilitarian tradition even richer and more powerful.